DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 427 605 HE 031 796

AUTHOR Marcus, Laurence R.
TITLE Threats to Staff Diversity: A Case Study. ASHE Annual Meeting Paper.
PUB DATE 1998-11-00
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (23rd, Miami, FL, November 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; College Faculty; Community Colleges; *Diversity (Faculty); Ethnic Relations; *Faculty College Relationship; Faculty Integration; Interviews; Job Satisfaction; Minority Group Teachers; Organizational Climate; Quality of Working Life; Teacher Integration; Two Year Colleges; *Work Attitudes; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS *ASHE Annual Meeting

ABSTRACT

This case study at a community college serving a small city and surrounding rural area was undertaken to examine how a diverse staff experiences the work place. Interviews were conducted with a stratified random sample of one-half of the student affairs group staff; half of the respondent group were people of color, and four out of five were women. The interview protocol for the study was developed in consultation with a staff committee; a "culture audit" was customized to fit the organizational setting. Questions focused on the sense of success among staff, how staff are inducted into the organizational culture, the quality of supervision, career development opportunities, the extent of team spirit, and general satisfaction working at the school. Findings included the following: while 70 percent of the staff believed they had been successful at the college, disaggregation of the data revealed a racial/ethnic discrepancy; some minorities cited lack of understanding of organizational politics and culture; there was a discrepancy in the frequency of mentoring of whites and minorities; inadequacies in the performance appraisal system; differences in gender and race/ethnicity responses to questions about quality of supervision; and, in fact, differences in gender, racial, and ethnic perceptions were seen in most areas examined. (Contains 21 references.) (CH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 427 605

Threats to Staff Diversity: A Case Study

Laurence R. Marcus
Rowan University

For Presentation at 1998 ASHE Annual Meeting, Miami FL, November 1998

HE 031 796

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

ASHE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ASHE Association for the Study of Higher Education

Headquartered at the University of Missouri-Columbia • College of Education • Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis • 211 Hill Hall, Columbia, MO 65211 • 573-882-9645 • fax 573-884-5714

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Miami, Florida, November 5-8, 1998. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Threats to Staff Diversity: A Case Study
Laurence R. Marcus
Rowan University
For Presentation at 1998 ASHE Annual Meeting, Miami FL, November 1998
DO NOT CITE WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL

Since the 1970s -- though at varying paces and with various levels of commitment and success -- colleges and universities across the country have been seeking to diversify their workforces. Publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (1997) and the annual report from the American Council on Education on the status of minorities in higher education present data on our progress, and inform us when issues regarding race, ethnicity, and gender in the workplace -- including harassment, other "hostile environment" situations, and "glass ceiling" concerns -- arise on campuses. However, Thomas (1990) found research on the diversity climate in all types of organizations to be limited.

In higher education, some studies are beginning to appear. Tack and Patity (1992) reviewed the literature regarding job satisfaction among women and minority faculty. They found that such factors as feeling less respected, being held to higher performance standards, receiving tenure and promotion at lower rates, feeling isolated, and, in the case of women, being lower paid, resulted in women and minorities being less satisfied than their male and white faculty counterparts. The combination of gender and ethnicity placed African American women as the least satisfied. Kossek and Zonia (1993) examined diversity climate among faculty in a limited fashion in their study of a major Midwestern state university. They sought to determine the extent to which efforts to promote diversity were valued; attitudes toward the qualifications of minorities and women; and whether minorities and women were perceived as being treated equitably in receipt of graduate assistants, release time, and above average merit pay raises.

More recently, Hurtado and Dey (1997) discussed the need for colleges and universities to focus on diversity

climate for faculty, as well as for students.

Diversity climate for professional staff in the collegiate sector also has received limited examination. Similar to the national studies of faculty life (e.g., Bowen, H.R. and Schuster, J.H., 1986; Astin, A.W., Korn, W.S., and Dey, E.L., 1991) focused on the collective, rather than on perceptions by race and gender, Cahill 's (1993) comprehensive study of job satisfaction among professional staff and librarians at New Jersey's state colleges examined issues of morale, sense of community, quality of supervisory support, and sense of efficacy did not disaggregate the data by race/ethnicity or gender. A case study, conducted by Mamarchev and Williamson (1991), of a biracial group 13 student affairs professionals from different public and independent institutions across the nation, found that all of the African Americans reported feeling excluded from informal social gatherings, and that the women would benefit from staff training to understand the male metaphors that seemed to permeate the conversation. (Alternatively, one might also conclude that the males might benefit from training that would result in their use of metaphors that all staff understand.) They also reported that the women and African Americans whom they interviewed were not as attuned to the informal structure and the political dynamics of their organizations as were the white males, and would benefit from having a mentor who could help them to understand these dimensions.

Research from other employment sectors may provide additional insight regarding

diversity issues among non-teaching professionals in higher education. For example, Fine, Johnson, and Ryan (1990) found that staff experience their workplace differently according to their race/ethnicity and gender, and have difficulty understanding the experiences of those from the other groups. Some of these differences concern perceived success on the job. While white males tend to see barriers to success being removed as a result of formal structures and policies, women and minorities tend to view their success as a factor of interpersonal barriers.

Further, different communication styles and networks operate in settings with diverse workforces. Fine, Johnson, and Ryan's (1990) study revealed that members of each racial/ethnic and gender group feel more comfortable interacting with members of their own group and in that group's style. Yet, restricted interaction, as well as communication in the style that women and minorities find most comfortable, has proven to retard one's ability to be successful, since the predominant group's communication pattern is usually the most important in organizational communications (Baker, 1995). Similar to Mamarchev and Williamson's (1991) finding that women needed to learn male metaphors, Baker (1995) concluded that minority staff need to adapt to the predominant communication pattern in order to be successful.

Communication style discrepancy is only one of the many differences that result from diversifying the workforce. Thus, Henderson (1994) suggests that diversity-related conflict is an inevitable part of the change process for a diversifying organization. However, such conflict may not always be apparent, given the tendency of members of the various groups experiencing diversity-related differences seek to minimize internal conflict by projecting their fear and anger

outward to other subsystems within the organization or to their clients, rather than focusing on their internal differences (Church, 1995; Thomas, 1997). These unresolved intergroup differences can be destructive if the conflict is not surfaced (Wilson, 1997). Once the conflict becomes apparent, its basis can be typically diagnosed as being grounded in the organizational culture (Henderson, 1994). Thus, consistent with the literature on organizational culture (Schein, 1995; Kouzes and Posner, 1995), leadership is the key to an organization's ability to realize the full potential of its diversity (Baker, 1995; Baba, 1995; Thomas, 1997; Wilson, 1997). Indeed, as Henderson (1994) notes, leaders may subvert their own best intentions regarding diversity by the nature of the supervision that they provide.

Background to the study

The following case study of the student affairs division at Tall Oaks Community College (a pseudonym) was undertaken to expand the literature regarding how a diverse staff experiences the work place, and the role that leaders need to play to facilitate a climate that promotes the potential of diversity. Tall Oaks is a useful venue for such a study since it has been proactive -- and successful -- in hiring a diverse student affairs staff, and has provided an on-going focus on their continuing professional development.

The college services a region of approximately 300,000 people living in a small city in the northeast, its suburbs, and the spacious surrounding rural area. The population in the region is more than 70 percent white. African Americans comprise 19 percent of the population, while Hispanics and Asian Americans are eight percent and three percent, respectively. Enrollments at

Tall Oaks are not fully reflective of the local population: whites account for three-quarters of the students; African Americans and Hispanics are under-represented; and women account for more than 62 percent of the enrollment, well above their 49 percent proportion of the local population. The commitment to diversity in staffing of the college's student affairs division is evident: approximately half of the staff are people of color and four out of five are women. This diversity is found at all levels within the division. For example, the dean is a white woman; her five directors include two women (one African American, one Hispanic) and three men (two white, one Hispanic).

The staff have worked cohesively, and have never exhibited any signs of intergroup divisiveness, though two situations involving students in the year preceding the study revealed differences in views among the staff according to their race/ethnicity and gender. One incident concerned campus reaction to a group of African American students congregating each day at the entrance of the cafeteria; white staff tended to concur with the concerns voiced by white students, while minority staff did not see an issue. The other episode was related an increase in inter-racial dating among students; while male staff tended to see an over-reaction by those who expressed concerns about the inter-racial dating, female staff tended to see issues of self-image and ethnic pride. The staff development committee within the student affairs division wondered whether these differences were harbingers of a polarization.

Methodology

The basis for this case study is an interview protocol that was developed in consultation

with the staff development committee. The "culture audit" suggested by Thomas (1991), was customized to fit the organizational setting and to incorporate some of the committee's specific concerns. Questions focused on the sense of success among the staff, how staff are inducted into the organizational culture, the quality of supervision that they receive, how they perceive the career development opportunities, the extent to which there is a team spiritedness within the organization, and general satisfaction with working at Tall Oaks. An external, multi-ethnic team of one man and two women, interviewed a stratified, random sample of half of the staff in the student affairs division, asking the questions on the protocol. Based on what it heard as the interviews progressed, the team probed for deeper understanding. Each interview took between 45 and 60 minutes to complete. The sample was stratified to be reflective of race/ethnicity and gender by level of position (supervisory, mid-level, frontline) in the student affairs division.

Findings

Perceptions of Success

More than 70 percent of the staff believed that they had been successful at the college. However, a disaagregation of the data reveals a racial/ethnic discrepancy. Only half of the minorities described themselves as being successful, while all but one white did. Those who felt themselves to be least successful included three minorities (one male and two females) and a white male. The latter would not discuss his reasons for his self-assessment. The minority male, who was relatively new to the organization, said that there was much that he had to learn before he could consider himself successful.

The stories told by the two minority women were compelling. One, a long-time staff member who had been promoted during her career, cried openly as she discussed the dismantling of programs that she and others had put in place to improve the retention levels of students of color. These programs, she asserted, had shown results, but were phased down or eliminated as the institution's budget constraints grew and as grant sources dried up. Instead of redirecting its money toward these efforts, funds were kept in the more traditional offices. She questioned whether the institution was truly as student-centered as its mission statement proclaimed, but she focused blame on herself. Her sense of failure was directly tied to her conclusion that if she had been able to convince the decision-makers to keep the programs going, retention rates among minority students would not be slipping again. (Interestingly, other women whom we interviewed, both white and minority, pointed to this woman as one of their heroes, someone whom they wanted to emulate because they perceived her to be successful.)

The other woman of color was a much more junior staff member, whose anger was evident. She said that some of the responsibilities that she had been told would be assigned her at the time that she was hired never seemed to come her way. Instead, those tasks, which she had looked forward to doing, were always given to others, usually to white women. She felt that she was always given more menial assignments, and believed that her talents were going to waste. She claimed that her office director (who was of the same ethnic group as she) played favorites -- a perception of others who were interviewed, as well -- and that she was among the non-favorites because she took seriously his statement that he wanted full discussion of every issue during his staff meetings. She said that she would ask questions and make suggestions, but that her director

perceived questions as challenge and suggestions as conflict. She said that after each meeting, others would thank her for raising what had been on their minds, though they had remained silent. After a frustrating year, she applied for a position with more responsibility in another office, but was not selected. She said that her director told her that he viewed her desire to move was a sign of questionable loyalty. About six months prior to our interview, she told the dean of her frustrations after the dean had asked how she was liking her job,. In response, the dean suggested to the director that the woman be placed on a particular committee that the dean believed she would find fulfilling. Unfortunately, the director saw the episode as "going behind his back," another act of disloyalty. The staff member reflected that she wished someone had told her that the institution operated in accordance with two sets of rules, and that the unspoken rules -- the ones that she had violated -- were the real ones.

Learning the culture

A white woman who rated her own success as being average also felt that the unwritten rules had constrained her. She said that, while the administration says it wants the staff to be independent, it really wants to be kept informed of staff activities in such a manner that "the leash is not too long," thereby mitigating against true professionalism. She said, "If someone had clued me in, I wouldn't have made the mistakes I made." Additionally, five minorities lamented that their lack of understanding of the organizational politics and culture had been problems that they, too, had to overcome.

This lack of understanding of organizational culture and politics raises the question of

how staff are inducted into the culture at Tall Oaks. The interviews revealed the absence of a formal orientation program for new staff, with responsibility resting with individual office directors to provide whatever they believe useful. Typically, this involves introducing the new person to the rest of the student affairs division, providing a description of what each office does, outlining the new staff member's job requirements, and providing assistance as the new person learns the responsibilities. Some supervisors take the additional step of serving as a mentor to their new staff or they help the new person to find a mentor.

More than 60 percent of the sample indicated that they had a mentor at some period of their employment at the college, and every one of them stated that the experience had been helpful to their careers. Importantly, the mentors were seen as having helped new staff to learn how to negotiate the organizational culture. There was, however, a discrepancy in the frequency of mentoring of whites and minorities. While nearly three-quarters of the whites had been mentored, only half of the minorities (and none of them who had been hired within the last several years) had such experience. This helps to explain why many had run afoul of the unwritten rules or did not know how to negotiate the micropolitical structure.

Quality of Supervision

Mentoring increases in importance given the apparent inadequacies of Tall Oaks' performance appraisal system. More than three-quarters of those interviewed stated that they receive informal feedback about their performance on the job, and find such information useful to knowing how well they are doing and what they need to do differently. However, gender and

race/ethnicity appear to be a factor in the extent to which one receives informal feedback: all of the men and all but one of the whites reported that they receive informal feedback; however, only 69 percent of the women and only 60 percent of the minorities did.

The other element of an effective performance appraisal system -- formal, periodic evaluation -- also appears problematic. Fewer than half of those interviewed indicated that they had received a formal performance appraisal at any time within the last five years; less than 30 percent indicated that such reviews occur at least on an annual basis. None of the people with three or fewer years of service had been evaluated. Neither gender and nor race/ethnicity appears to be a factor in whether a formal evaluation occurs. Nearly all of the staff said that they would prefer an annual evaluation so that they would officially know what their supervisor thought of their performance and to receive guidance on what they need to do to improve, and so that their achievements could be formally documented.

Staff were asked about their ease in discussing problems with their supervisor. Generally, whites and men felt more comfortable bringing problems to their supervisors than did minorities and women. (The same patterns held true when the problem had to do with bias-related matters.) There were seven women who felt unable to discuss all or some problems with their supervisors, either because the supervisors are "always too busy" for them, seemed uninterested in their concerns, did not have good answers to their problems, or had gained reputations for avoiding problems. The men who had the same supervisors reported no such difficulties. For example, a Latina said of her supervisor (an African American),

> She and I are in different worlds. Where I see a problem, she thinks things are okay. When we both see a problem, her suggestion seems like the wrong thing to do, and she gets upset if I don't do it. I'm happy to take her advice, but I am a professional and should be able to exercise my own judgment in the end. If I ask, I have to do it her way. So I don't ask.

Yet, a white male said of the same supervisor, "We have good discussions. She's always there for me if I need her.... She's open to different points of view."

Staff were asked to rate the over-all quality of their supervision. Here, too, there were differences according to gender and race/ethnicity. All of the whites and all of the men rated the quality of their supervision on the top half of the scale, while 70 percent of the minorities and 63 percent of the women rated theirs on the bottom half of the scale. Seven staff members (five of whom were white) found no negative aspects in the supervision that they received. Only one person of color gave the supervisor the best possible rating, while nearly half of the whites did. At the other end of the continuum, six people could not cite anything positive about their supervisor; all were women, three of whom were people of color and three of whom were white. The only individual who gave her supervisor the worst possible rating was a minority woman. Among behaviors that led to the assessments of poor supervision were lack of communication (cited five times), disorganization (cited four times), and being too busy to help (cited four times).

Career Development and Equal Opportunity for Advancement

Everyone expressed a receptivity to vertical job loading -- the addition of new responsibilities that help the staff member to grow (Herzberg, 1987) -- but there appeared be

some disparate treatment according to gender and race/ethnicity. More than 70 percent of the staff reported that they had requested the opportunity to assume additional responsibilities. The requests were granted 80 percent of the time. Women were more apt to ask than men, but the men were more apt to have their request granted. Minorities and whites asked at approximately the same rate, but whites had their requests granted more often. Three minority women mentioned the need for supervisors to look at the true talents of their staff. One of them indicated that she had stopped asking because her requests were never approved. She stated that her supervisor keeps adding to her responsibilities in a mundane, horizontal fashion. She spoke with some bitterness when she mentioned the name of a white female colleague who "always gets the good stuff, but I get the junk. I have a degree, but I get treated like a secretary. I know that we're short-handed in that [secretarial] area, and I'm willing to do my part, but why is it always me who has to be the one to catch up on the filing? The last new project that I received was to enter a bunch of names into the data base. I can do more."

Seven women (six of whom were minority) discussed what they saw as the shortcomings of the career development effort at Tall Oaks. Two commented that despite the training programs in which they have participated, they are still doing the same job and are expected by their supervisors to do it in the same way as they did prior to the training. Two mentioned that budgetary limitations precluded their involvement in career development activities of their own choosing (such as conferences) in favor of group training sessions in topical areas where they already knew more than was presented. There was also criticism of training programs that were surface in nature. Several people suggested that if the institution is to continue group training, it

should depart from the "one size fits all" approach in favor of sessions targeted to identified staff needs based on education, professional experience, and nature of position.

An African American woman observed that the opportunity for advancement within student affairs is slim, given the limited number of openings at higher levels. She felt that such a situation results both in frustration and lack of role models for minorities, particularly males. While the dim prospects for advancement may be real, the survey revealed that 70 percent of the sample had received at least one promotion during their years at the college, and that all groups had been treated similarly.

Diversity and Team-Spiritedness

Given the understanding that team building is one of the proven building blocks of a diversity program (Henderson, 1994), the staff were queried about the attention that their supervisors devoted to this area. With only a few exceptions, they reported no such activity. Never the less more than three-quarters stated that most people in their office act in a team fashion. There was no disparity of perception based on race/ethnicity, but some based on gender, with all of the men feeling that they were a member of an effective team, while only 69 percent of the women felt similarly about themselves.

The staff identified three characteristics -- everyone pulling their weight, helping each other, and each person being treated with respect -- as the most important elements of an effective team. They said that the first two occurred primarily because of the concern that the

members of the staff in an office had for each other. In the few instances where they saw people behaving in a contrary manner, they said both that peer pressure was ineffective with those individuals and that the supervisors were not willing to confront the problem. Regarding respect, more than three-quarters of the staff believe that they were treated with high or the highest respect, and all but one (a Latina working in a frontline position) felt that the respect that they received was at an acceptable level. However, there was a disparate perception based on gender and race/ethnicity. While all of the whites and all but one of the men believed that they were treated with high or the highest respect, only half of the minorities and three-quarters of the women felt similarly.

General satisfaction

Those interviewed were a relatively stable group, with all but four having served at the college for longer than three years. More than four of every five rated the quality of their work experience as being better than average. However, a disaggregation of the data by race/ethnicity and gender revealed a different picture. While all of the whites and all of the men felt that their experience had been better than average, only three-quarters of the women and 60 percent of the people of color felt similarly. No one except minority women providing a rating of average or less. Indeed, consistent with Tack and Patity's (1992) finding regarding faculty, minority women were the least satisfied group.

When asked whether they felt fulfilled by their work, the pattern was the same regarding race/ethnicity, but different according to gender. Minorities clustered around the middle of the

response scale, while whites clustered toward the most fulfilled end. Proportionately more women than men indicated fulfillment on the job. Similar to the response on the earlier question, the only two people who felt that their expectations of working at the college had been mainly unfulfilled were both minority women. The reasons that minorities cited for feeling unfulfilled involved socio-emotional issues such as believing that their suggestions were ignored, that upper administration displayed a condescending attitude toward them, and that they did not feel "in" on what was occurring in the organization. They also tended to feel that promotions were based on favoritism, even though several among them had been promoted.

The reason that women were more fulfilled than men seemed to be based on a different set of job expectations between the genders. The women expected that their jobs would provide them with the opportunity to work in a team-oriented and supportive environment; the ability to grow, either by taking courses, involvement in training activities, or job enrichment; and the opportunity for interaction with students, including seeing the success of their efforts at graduation. These expectations had been met. The men were much more focused on compensation and status issues, feeling underpaid and stagnant.

The interviews revealed the staff perception that the student affairs area is, on balance, a good place to work. However, whites and males were much more comfortable with some of the processes than were minorities and women, and in some regards there appeared to be disparate treatment. One might hypothesize, then, that minorities and women may be more prone to leave the college for positions elsewhere. Approximately three of five staff had, at some point,

considered leaving the Tall Oaks. Consistent with their expectations having been less satisfied and their feeling less successful at the college, more minorities (80%) than whites (45%) had considered leaving, but women as a group were less likely than men to have such thoughts. Several married women expressed their quandary. If they were to leave the college, it would most likely require moving from the area or leaving the higher education profession, since there are only a few other colleges in the area.. While they did not want to do the latter, the former was proscribed by virtue of family considerations. They reported that their husband's positions were such that they were tied to the area. However, single women, particularly those in middle-level positions, were the most likely to consider leaving, primarily with the hope of advancement.

Implications

Tall Oaks has taken impressive measures over the years to hire a diverse staff. However, this study revealed a dissimilitude related to gender and race/ethnicity that, if unattended, could have several serious consequences including an increasing level of job dissatisfaction among women and minority staff, a disruption in the unity of effort that the student affairs staff currently displays, and an unraveling of the institution's diversity progress. While the ability to generalize from the experience of one institution may be limited, the findings in this case study are not surprising if one considers the differences in outlook that people reveal according their background characteristics, life experiences, and world view. Thus, leaders who want to achieve the potential of a diverse workforce need to be attentive to how their staff experience the

workplace. They must recognize that the challenge of diversification is not completed when diversity in numbers has been achieved.

Supervisory Practice

The most important finding in this study is the association between the nature of supervisory practice and the differences in how the members of a diverse staff experience their workplace. Minorities felt that their expectations regarding working at Tall Oaks were less fulfilled; both women and minorities perceived that they were treated with less respect, that the quality of their work experience was less than reported by whites and males, and that their supervisors were not cognizant of such perceptions. Further, supervisors provided less feedback about performance to their women and minority staff than they provided to their staff who were male and white. Similarly, they either provided less mentoring to minorities or were less apt to help them to find mentors. Further, many women and minorities felt that their supervisors (only two of whom were white males) had let them down in helping them to understand how to be successful within the organizational culture. Consequently, they indicated more dissatisfaction than males and whites with the quality of the supervision that they received. The frustrations that they experienced prompted many of the minorities and single women to seriously consider leaving their jobs for employment elsewhere, creating the potential for a revolving door effect. It is important to note that the concerns among male staff of feeling underpaid and stagnant did not result in their desire to leave, while the feelings among minorities and single women about a lack of authentic engagement with supervisors did.

Significantly, no one even hinted a belief that any supervisor was overtly or intentionally acting in a racist, ethnocentric, or sexist fashion. Neither was there any suggestion that supervisors were acting in accordance with stereotypes, that they were unaware or disrespectful of cultural differences, or that they held women and minorities to a higher, double standard. Indeed, the supervisory staff was seen as valuing diversity. However, the study indicates that they were not doing an effective job in managing diversity.

Having a diverse supervisory staff may raise sensitivity to such matters, but the assumption should not be made that a diverse supervisory staff (or even the women and minorities among them) will, *a priori*, be adept in this regard, nor that the organizational culture will support their efforts. Weak supervisory practice, even if the supervisors are well-intentioned, can readily undermine the strong efforts that a college makes to diversify its staff. Leaders who want to maintain an effective and diverse workforce should be proactive in helping supervisors to focus on the critical role that they play in developing and making use of the talents of women and minority staff, in making staff feel that they are important and respected, and, in fostering intergroup harmony and facilitating the achievement of individual potential. Training for supervisors in the skills of leading a diverse workforce would clearly benefit the organization.

Diversity Training

The recognition by many organizations, including Tall Oaks, of the value of providing staff training regarding diversity is longstanding. Never the less, such efforts often fall short of

their marks. Henderson (1994) discussed the typical problems associated with diversity training and suggested that trainers must be expert at group process if the workshops are to achieve their potential. The Tall Oaks case study found that most of the past training efforts at the college were skillfully facilitated, but that training fell short of its goals for a different reason: the amount of diversity training is not as important as its depth. Most staff correctly observed that diversity training sessions conveyed a recognition by the leadership regarding the complexities of moving beyond the traditional approach to staffing. However, they concurred that the single-session approach taken every few years was ineffective because the content of every workshop was essentially a repeat of the previous one. Said a white male, "For me, most of the workshops are 'been there, done that.' We're never going to move forward unless we take the time to go below the surface and to deal with what we find." A Latina commented that "when you turn over rocks, you find ugly things underneath. Our workshops only point out the rocks." An African American woman said that she had had enough of the current approach:

> We have had so much diversity training that we've been "diversity-ed" to death. On the other hand, we never get beyond being told that we need to learn how to get along with people who are different from ourselves. I'm willing to get into it. I think we should, but we won't, so I'll probably take a sick day when the next diversity training comes.

Thus, a diversity training program must overcome the cynicism of staff that it is simply "one of things that we have to do for a morning every year or so." Staff need to believe that the training matters. This is not be easy work and requires that the training continue for a sustained period of time. Leaders must commit to an organizational development, culture-building model that includes careful follow-up to assure that the knowledge gained in the sessions is put into practice, subsequent training to help staff to surmount the problems that they encounter, and

recognition for those who exhibit the desired behaviors.

Further, the "one size fits all" approach to training should be replaced with a program that permits multiple entry points based on past diversity training, educational background, and experience in human and intergroup relations. As one supervisor said, "It doesn't make sense for me to be in the same workshop with my secretary. I've spent a career working on issues of racism, sexism, and prejudice. She hasn't. We both can use some help, but my needs are different than hers." Similarly, an entry-level professional said that she would like a forum on "how to deal with students who approach me assuming that I will treat them differently, because we're from different ethnic groups." Her observations of the more experienced staff were that they were beyond needing help with such "day-to-day issues." Training programs customized to fit the needs of groups of staff not only require the input of staff concerning their own perceived needs, but also oblige leaders to reflect on the extent to which the organization is benefiting from its diversity and what improvements are necessary for the potential to be realized.

Diversity Leadership

Such critically reflective activity by leadership is imperative since diversity-related issues may not be readily apparent. Consistent with earlier research that indicated that staff seek to keep their diversity-related concerns to themselves (Church, 1995; Thomas, 1997), this study revealed little, if any, open discussion regarding the concerns that the staff expressed to the interviewers. Indeed, few knew that their colleagues even shared their perceptions. Nearly everyone stated that they felt free to discuss any issue with the supervisors, even if it concerned

disparate treatment according to race, ethnicity, or gender, or other diversity-related bias on the job. Yet, despite the concerns voiced by many, no one had such a conversation with the supervisor.

The leader needs to cultivate a culture that values the identification and addressing of problems in intergroup relations and in the quality of the work experience. In walking the talk, the leader may need to begin with an assessment of one's own behaviors to determine what s/he may be doing -- or not doing -- to weaken the diversity effort. This includes talking with others to learn if their experience is congruent with the experience that they want and that the leader wants them to have. The result may be discomforting in the short-run (remember what the Tall Oaks staff member said about what may be found under the rocks), but will have long-term benefits if the response is authentic.

References

Astin, A.W., Korn, W.S., and Dey, E.L. (1991). *The American College Teacher*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California at Los Angeles.

Baba, M. L. (1995). The cultural ecology of the corporation: Explaining diversity in work group responses to organizational transformation, *Journal of applied behavioral science*, 31 (2), 202-233.

Baker, L.D. (1995). Racism in professional settings: Forms of address as clues to power relations, *Journal of applied behavioral science*, 31 (2), 186-201.

Bowen, H.R. and Schuster, J.H. (1986). *American professors: A national resource imperiled.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Cahill, J. (1993). *Job satisfaction in the New Jersey state colleges*. Union, NJ: Council of New Jersey State College Locals.

Church, A.H. (1995). Diversity in workgroup settings: A case study, *Leadership and organizational development journal*, 16 (6), 3-9.

Editors of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. (1997, August 29). Almanac Issue, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 44, 26.

Fine, M.C., Johnson, F.L., and Ryan, M.S. (1990). Cultural diversity in the workplace, *Public Personnel Management*, 19, 305-19.

Henderson, G. (1994). *Cultural diversity in the workplace: Issues and strategies*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Herzberg, F. (1987, September-October). One more time: How do you motivate employees? *Harvard Business Review*, 65, 109-21

Hurtado, S. and Dey, E. (1997). Achieving the Goals of multiculturalism and diversity. In Peterson, M., Dill, D., Mets, L., and Associates. *Planning and management for a changing environment: A handbook on redesigning postsecondary institutions*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. pp. 405-431.

Kossek, E.E. and Zonia, S.C. (1993). Assessing diversity climate: A field study of reactions to employer efforts to promote diversity, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14, 61-81.

Kouzes, J.M. and Posner, B. Z. (1995). *The leadership challenge: How to keep getting extraordinary things done in organizations. 2nd edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mararchev, H.L. and Williamson, M.L. (1991). Women and African Americans: Stories told and lessons learned - A case study, *Managing the political dimension of student affairs, New directions for student services*, 55, 67-79.

Morrison, A. (1992). *The new leaders: Guidelines on leadership diversity in America*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership. 2nd edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tack, M.W. and Patity, C.L. (1992). *Faculty job satisfaction: Women and minorities in peril. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 4*. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.

Thomas, R.R. (1990). From affirmative action to affirmative diversity, *Harvard Business Review*, (March-April), 107-117.

_____. (1991). *Beyond race and gender: Unleashing the power of your total work force by managing diversity*. New York: AMACOM.

_____. (1997). Barriers and facilitators to managing workplace diversity. In Welch, L., Cleckley, B., and McClure, M. (Eds.). *Strategies for promoting pluralism in education and the workplace*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. pp. 43-58.

Wilson, G. (1997). Managing workplace diversity. In Welch, L., Cleckley, B., and McClure, M. (Eds.). *Strategies for promoting pluralism in education and the workplace*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. pp. 59-64.